

# IT IS TIME TO PROVIDE RELIEF FOR SENIORS FROM THE HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Mr. ALLEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, from Maine to California, seniors cannot afford to buy the medicines that their doctors tell them they have to take. Why? Because the pharmaceutical industry engages in widespread price discrimination against seniors. Seniors pay twice as much as the drug companies' best customers. They pay 70 percent more than Canadians and 100 percent more than Mexicans. They are discriminated against. In short, the most profitable industry in the country is charging the highest prices in the world to people who can least afford it.

Today, we Democrats are signing a discharge petition to bring two bills to the floor, one bill to give all seniors a discount and the second bill to provide universal prescription drug coverage on Medicare. It is time to act. We should act now, sign the discharge petition and give our seniors some relief.

## REPUBLICANS STAND FIRM ON BUDGET PRIORITIES

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, we are continuing right now the very important budget negotiation process. One thing that the Republican Party stands firm on is that we have to meet our Social Security/Medicare obligations. Last year our budget's first priority was to put aside \$1.9 trillion for Social Security and Medicare. The second step is debt reduction. Last year, we put aside \$2 trillion for debt reduction. And then after those three things have happened, and only after those three things happened, was there a trigger for tax relief. This year we passed the marriage tax penalty because it is not fair that if you live with each other you pay less taxes than if you are married. We passed that out of the House. We hope the Senate will pass it, and we hope the President will not veto it as he already has promised to do.

But the second part of that tax relief for tax fairness is to say to a senior, if you are working, you should not be penalized on your Social Security, because people are living longer, the needs are greater, and people need to work and want to work. It is healthy. There are lots of benefits to it. But if they do make this decision, they should not be penalized under Social Security.

The Republican Party will be having this bill in committee today. I hope we get it on the floor soon and pass it so that the Senate can.

□ 1045

# MAKE PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, our seniors face skyrocketing prices for prescription drugs. Many of my constituents have written to me about having to choose between buying food and paying for the life-saving medicines that they need. For millions of seniors, a prescription drug benefit is the difference between getting the medicine they need for healthy, independent lives, and pain and suffering. For those who are skipping meals or missing rent payments, a prescription drug benefit is a necessity that would bring dignity to their lives.

I urge my colleagues today to sign the petitions at the desk to allow a debate on proposals that would end price discrimination and provide a prescription drug benefit for all seniors. We have an historic opportunity to make medicine affordable and accessible. We could do this in a heartbeat if the Republican leadership would allow debate on this floor.

Modern science has blessed us with many wonderful new medicines, but if seniors cannot afford them, these medicines are of little use. I implore my colleagues, sign the petitions at the desk. Begin substantive discussion on how to make prescription drugs affordable to the people who need them.

## PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT NEEDED NOW

(Mrs. THURMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, today we have heard about the 24 million people we supposedly helped last week. Well, let us talk about the 39 million people we could help that are under Medicare.

Let me just explain to you that this is a dollars and cents issue for us. We are grappling with the trust fund on Medicare and making sure that the expenses are kept down. Well, there is one way you can do that, and the one way you can do that is to make sure that seniors get their prescription drugs.

Let me just give you an example of what somebody wrote to me in my district. "My mom and dad do not have prescription drugs coverage, therefore must pay full price for all of their drugs. Mom has been cutting her cholesterol pill, Zocor, in half, so it will last two months. The pharmacist says they will not be effective and she is endangering her health. The prescription drug went from \$80.49 at the beginning of last year to \$95.99."

What do you think the cost of this is when this woman ends up in the hos-

pital because she cannot take the medicine that is going to keep her healthy?

We need to make sure Members are signing this discharge petition so we can have an honest debate on this floor to help the 39 million people, and that number is growing.

## AMERICA NEEDS A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

(Mr. FORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge this Congress to take steps towards enacting a comprehensive prescription drug benefit. We have heard from so many of our colleagues why this is important, not only to their constituents, but constituents around the Nation.

Since the creation of the polio vaccine almost 50 years ago, the United States has been the engine of worldwide medical advancement. The finest doctors in the world are trained at our medical schools. Our government funds cutting-edge research at the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

American pharmaceutical companies are at the forefront of innovation. American innovation in the prescription drug industry is the envy of the world. They are producing new drugs that will allow people to lead healthier, happier, and longer lives.

But in America today, those most in need of those life-sustaining and life-saving drugs frequently find themselves on buses bound for Canada to find affordable prescription drugs.

Prescription drugs are an integral part of health care, especially for seniors. But at least 13 million Medicare beneficiaries have no drug coverage at all. Seniors often have to pay three times as much for drugs than those under the age of 65. It is unfair and it is wrong.

This is an issue that is critical to the citizens of my District and my State. In 1998, Tennessee led the Nation in prescription drug use, with a per capita consumption of 40 percent above the national average.

It is time for a Medicare prescription drug benefit. I urge my colleagues to sign the discharge petition.

## PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES TOO HIGH FOR SENIORS

(Mr. GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this Congress should have an open floor debate on legislation to help seniors afford the high cost of prescription drugs. We cannot sit on this issue any longer.

It is estimated we have 13 million seniors who do not have prescription drug coverage, and the number is increasing rapidly, almost as rapidly as